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# Institute Says U.S. Stronger Than U.S.S.R.

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LONDON, May 6--The United States has emerged from the recent years of crisis "in better shape" than the Soviet Union, the highly regarded International Institute for Strategic Studies said today.

Despite Watergate, Vietnam, the oil crisis and recession, the United States has maintained unimpaired its "direct" security commitments to Western Europe and Japan, the institute's study says.

American detents in Southeast Asia and Africa, the report suggests, have been more than matched by a long string of Soviet setbacks from the Middle East through Russian grain fields to Portugal.

The annual "Strategic Survey" of the institute is important on two grounds. The institute is an independent research outfit and it has excellent links to British and U.S. military and intelligence sources.

Its estimate of a "strengthened" U.S. commitment to the defense of Europe and Japan is a common European view that often goes unreported. Some commentators, relying on traditional Cold War sources, routinely report that Europe fears a weakening of the American will. The contrary Institute judgment, largely the work of its director, Christoph Bergmann, is probably more representative of official thinking.

To support the case of relative U.S. strength, the document cites this list of recent Soviet setbacks:

Moscow's reduction to a sideline role in the Israeli-Egyptian talks; its loss of influence in Iraq after Baghdad's pact with Iran; the growing independence of Syria from Soviet domination; Japan's insistence on strengthening ties with China; Moscow's sharing of influence with China in Laos and Vietnam; the defeat of the Communists and their military allies in Portugal; and the insistence of Western Communist parties on independence from Moscow, a demand that belied Soviet plans for a conference of European Communist parties.

The report, however, is far from delighted about every American development. In the wake of Vietnam, it describes the new American policy as one of "selective" rather than "global involvement," of refusal to oppose automatically every Soviet move. The United States thus runs the risk, the paper warns, of failing to influence events before security is affected and then of over- or under-reacting.

The study is also troubled about what it sees as a swing in power from the "imperial president" to the "executive Congress." This deprives the United States "of a necessary measure of flexibility," the report asserts, because a legislature is "too clumsy" to handle foreign affairs. The paper predicts that a "new and more stable balance" will emerge in time.

This complaint too is a common view among Europeans, few of whom are familiar with a system of checks and balances. Even in parliamentary Britain, power is highly centralized and this is regarded as essential to the conduct of military, foreign and monetary affairs.

The institute report is sharply critical of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and his insistence that governments with Communists must leave NATO. The paper concedes that Communist ministers are "undesirable" but says the situation is "manageable."

Kissinger's approach is a "dangerous tactic" because it could stir latent anti-American feeling, presumably in France and Italy, and build support for local Communist parties. Kissinger's warning that the presence of Communists in Western governments will create a major crisis could be a "self-fulfilling prophecy," the report said.

The institute also annually examines in detail the East-West military balance, in a report published later in the year. This survey also touches on it, including that the balance is currently "acceptable," despite the buildup in Soviet weapons and the Soviet navy.

On the European Front alone, the report says that the Warsaw Pact advantage in numbers of men, tanks and planes is offset by the NATO edge in quality.

The report also asserts that the world has become a "more dangerous" place. Old conflicts went unsettled in 1975, it argues, including Vietnam, and new ones emerged in Lebanon and southern Africa.

The paper talks of an erosion of barriers to conflict, citing the diminished standing of the United Nations and the failure to reach a new agreement limiting strategic weapons.

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